



MigRefHealth

Co-creating asset and place-based approaches to
tackling refugee and migrant health exclusion

Hong Kong BN(O) event
6 September 2025



Aims of today

1. About the project
2. Research progress so far
3. Next steps



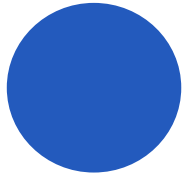
About MigRefHealth

This research is a **collaboration** between 19 academic and community partners working together across 3 regions and 12 field sites



Project Goal

To make sure that **community assets** used by **local communities** are collaboratively identified and better supported to help **improve the health outcomes** for refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant communities.





A “community asset” is a service, activity or space that is an integral part of community life. It can include advice and information services, community hubs, community groups, religious organisations, parks and open spaces, food banks, leisure centres etc.



Project Objectives

The project aims to achieve its goal by:

- Investigating how the Social Determinants of Health impact on migrant, refugee and asylum seekers health outcomes
- Examining how community assets support their health and wellbeing
- Co-designing place-based models which show how integrated services can tackle health inequalities
- Sharing these models to other areas



Research Strategy



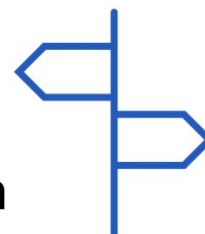
Our project focuses on **3 key areas:**



Accommodation



Food/Nutrition



Support Services

With **4 migrant populations:**

- Hong Kongers
- Afghans
- Syrians
- Ukrainians



PLUS one EU and one non-EU population dependent on the field site



Approach

The project has a collaborative approach with co-production, community voice and stakeholder engagement embedded throughout:

- **Community partners** work in conjunction with the **academic team** throughout the project
- The project is divided into 4 work packages. Each has an academic lead, a community lead and an expert member with specialist experience
- Our community partner in Essex is Local Government East





Methods

Work packages 2 & 3 are the project's fieldwork phase. They consist of:

- **Secondary research** to scope existing **literature** and create field site **demographic profiles**
- **Desk research** and **co-production** to create an initial digital asset map
- **Walking interviews** carried out by trained Community Co-Researchers (CCRs)
- 6 of the 12 **Community Forums** at each field site using a variety of qualitative and creative methods





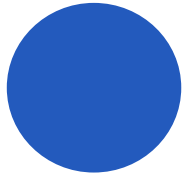
Key Project Activities at end of July 2025

- 408 participants from 38 countries
- 33 were Hong Kongers
- 19 Community Co-researchers
- 83 Walking interviews – 4 were Hong Kongers
- 21 workshops and 15 interviews – 27/286 were Hong Kongers
- 12 storytelling creative sessions – 5/122 were Hong Kongers
- Stakeholder engagement sessions
- Over 1500 community assets identified



Results so far

- a. Food
- b. Housing
- c. Services





a. Food

Cooking is an important part of people's cultures

"To be honest, for Hong Kongers, food is a big deal, and it definitely influences our mental health ... I'd say 8 or 9 out of 10. Hong Kongers really love food. We're all foodies."

Home country food provides emotional comfort

Some migrants were taken aback by the UK's culture of convenience and fast foods

"We Hong Kongers don't solely cook pure Chinese cuisine but also 'Western' stuff, sort of like mixing."

Shop at general & specialist supermarkets

Issues with distance, cost and quality

"There are some cooking ingredients, like Shaoxing Rice Wine. You have to go to the Sainsbury's in Stanway for that, the supermarket is big enough, and they've got a lot of Asian food."

Food bank items inappropriate

Inedible food served in hotel accommodation

"For example, steak, poultry, and pork—the price and quality here are way better than in Hong Kong."



b. Housing

Finding accommodation in the UK varied by route of entry and the level of support provided

"If you're a Hong Konger moving here, just finding a place to live is already a huge challenge."

Issues finding social housing

"They [landlords] do reference checks very seriously—and harshly. ... The reference check proves that you can afford the rent. If you can't prove that, some landlords ask you to pay the rent in advance. ... If you can't ... you have to find a guarantor ... has to be a local. As a new migrant here, if you can't find a guarantor, how can you rent a house? The only way is to get a job. ... it's incredibly hard."

Issues with hotels

Barriers to private rented accommodation

Housing quality concerns

"I've been living in town. It didn't feel very secure. So later on, when I was choosing a place to live, I decided to stay outside the town centre."

Safety and security



c. Access to Services

Language is **the** major barrier

Service eligibility criteria

Affordability

Lack of knowledge

Qualification recognition

Job Centre approach

Digital ability

Transport

Faith & community groups

"NHS support should be improved ... Take my parents, ... their English isn't good, ... they can't book online, they struggle on the phone, and they often don't have an interpreter. ... If interpreters were readily available... then, people could properly explain their medical conditions and get the right treatment."

"For someone who needs Cantonese-language mental health support, there's almost nothing available ... Even the NHS wasn't much help, because everything was in English."

"Even though I often say that the UK system is familiar to us, things like job-hunting and workplace culture are completely different ... Another big issue is job mismatching. Many Hong Kongers struggle to find jobs that match their qualifications."

At the moment, it's (Chinese Association) mainly just a place to eat They also have a small library with Chinese-language books ... and they also have some English books related to Cantonese culture."

"Before I moved here, I got connected to the local church through Welcome Churches of the UKHK. And prior to my arrival, the pastor contacted me, asking if I needed help with anything."

**What are we missing?
Help us map your local assets by
filling and circulating our online
form:**

<https://tinyurl.com/2wkxd4t9>



Next Steps

- ✓ Harvest and Cook Session –
Wednesday 17 September
10am-2pm, Highwoods Country Park
- ✓ Share local mapping data once available
- ✓ Deep dive into what and how you **use** community assets, what you would **like to use** and what would make them **suitable** for you?





Thank you

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